

# The Sikh Woman



**MAHARANI JINDAN KAUR**  
by Mr Gurbachan Singh Sidhu

Published by The Sikh Missionary Society (UK)

**“Dedicated to Young  
Sikh Women in Their  
Search for Enlightenment  
and Inspiration”**

# **THE SIKH WOMAN**

By

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## **Foreword to the Third Edition**

**I have the privilege to launch the third edition of this book and I wish to place on record my own and my management committee's indebtedness and gratitude to S. Gurbachan Singh Sidhu to allow the Sikh Missionary Society to print this publication and distribute free to the readers.**

**Mr Sidhu is an eminent Sikh scholar and has devoted his entire life for writing on different aspects of Sikhism. In this book he depicts the status of women in Sikhism and interprets the Sikh doctrine of 'Equality of man and woman' convincingly by quoting from original texts.**

**In the present edition the life story of Maharani Jind Kaur, the younger wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is included. I am thankful to S. Mohinder Singh Grewal for this addition. Also a very important text from Gurbani about women by Guru Nanak Dev Ji is added.**

**I am extremely grateful to Bhuller family from Slough, Berkshire for donating the entire cost of printing this book and in spreading the great message of our Gurus. They have made this contribution in the loving memory of their parents Sardar Kirpal Singh and Sardarni Harbans kaur Bhuller.**

**I am sure that this publication will be very useful and inspiring for our readers especially those of young age.**

**August 15, 2011.**

**Teja Singh Manget  
Hon General Secretary  
Sikh Missionary Society**



ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥



**THE SIKH MISSIONARY SOCIETY, UK**

**(REGD)**

**8-10 Featherstone Road, Southall, UB2 5AA**

The Sikh Missionary Society is the brain child of three eminent postgraduate literates, namely Gurbachan Singh Sidhu, Gurbakhsh Singh and Kirpal Singh Rai, who were really passionate about providing an insight into Sikh Religion, culture and history to the wider audience, especially the younger generation. Their idea of providing reading material free of charge is being followed even today.

The Society continues to produce literature in English and Punjabi and this enables people of other faiths to learn about Sikhism. In addition to this, the Society participates in other activities such as arranging lectures on Sikhism, teaching of Punjabi language, Gurbani recitation, Akhand and Sehaj Paths, Yoga classes, Anand Karj as well as registration of marriages.

For the past 34 years the Society has also been organising highly successful annual Gurmat Camps for young Sikhs to promote community living in the Gurmat way as part of a wider society, respecting others and being good citizens.

With the completion of the Guru Angad Dev Complex, a new National Resource Centre has been opened where prayer books, books on Sikhism in Punjabi and English, GCSE and A Level Punjabi books, greeting cards, CDs, DVDs and a wide range of Sikh Artefacts are available.

The membership of the Society is open to all those who are sympathetic to the cause of Sikh Faith and agree with the aims and objectives of the Society by completing the prescribed membership form. The membership is currently £50 for life and £10 annually.

## **Ceremonies pertaining to Birth and Naming of Child**

### **Article XVII From Sikh Reht Maryada**

- (a) In a Sikh's household, as soon after the birth of a child as the mother becomes capable of moving about and taking bath (irrespective of the number of days which that takes), the family and relatives should go to a gurdwara with karhah prashad (sacred pudding) or get karhah prashad made in the gurdwara and recite in the holy presence of the Guru Granth Sahib such hymns as "pārmeshar dīā banā" (Sorath M. 5),\* "Satguru sache dīā bhej" (Asa M. 5)\*\* that are expressive of joy and thankfulness. Thereafter if a reading of the holy Guru Granth Sahib had been taken up, that should be concluded. Then the holy Hukam (command) should be taken. A name starting with the first letter of the hymn of the Hukam (command) should be proposed by the granthi (man in attendance of the holy book) and, after its acceptance by the congregation, the name should be announced by him. The boy's name must have the suffix "Singh" and the girl's, the suffix "Kaur".

After that the Anand Sahib (short version comprising six stanzas) should be recited and the Ardas in appropriate terms expressing joy over the naming ceremony be offered and the karhah prashad distributed.

- (b) The superstition as to the pollution of food and water in consequence of birth\*\*\* must not be subscribed to, for the holy writ is : *"The birth and death are by His ordinance; coming and going is by His will. All food and water are, in principle, clean, for these life-sustaining substances are provided by Him."*
- (c) Making shirts or frocks for children out of the Holy Book's draperies is a sacrilege.

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\* The Almighty Lord has granted support. (Sorath M. 5, Guru Granth Sahib P. 628)

\*\* The true Lord has sent this gift. (Asa M. 5, Guru Granth Sahib P. 396)

\*\*\* There is a wide-spread belief among certain sections of Indian people that a birth in a household causes pollution (sutak) which is removed by the thorough bathing of the mother, the baby and persons attending on her as also by a thorough cleaning of the house, the utensils and the clothes, after prescribed periods of ten, twentyone and forty days.

## **The Woman's status in Sikhi**

More than four hundred years ago Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of the Sikh religion praised the role of the woman in the human society. It is hard to find a similar recognition of the importance of the woman's position in any other scripture of the world.

Guru Gobind Singh the tenth Master of the Sikhs made it mandatory for all the Sikh females to use a very respectable word Kaur meaning a "princess" as their last or middle name in 1699.

That is what the Sikh women have been doing since then.

The following verse by Guru Nanak Dev appears on page four hundred seventy three of Sri Guru Grant Sahib:

**ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣੁ ਵੀਆਹੁ ॥**

**ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ ॥**

Bhund jumneai bhund nimeai bund mungun veeahu  
Bhunduho hovai dosti bhundho chalai raahu

*Within a woman, the man is conceived and from a woman he is born,*

*With a woman he is engaged and married.*

*With the woman he contracts friendship and through this relationship the human race continues.*

**ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥**

**ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥**

Bhund muaa bhund bhaaleeai bhund hovai bundhaan  
So kio munda aakheeai jit jumahai rajaan

*When one's wife dies, one looks for another woman to marry, that is how  
discipline comes in his family.  
Why is she called bad from whom kings are born?*

**ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੀ ਭੰਡੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥**

**ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ ॥**

Bhundho hee bhund oopjai bhundai baajh n koe  
Nanak bhundai baahura eko sucha soai

*From a woman, a woman is born. Without the woman there can be none  
Nanak says that only The One True Lord is without her.*

**ਜਿਤੁ ਮੁਖਿ ਸਦਾ ਸਾਲਾਹੀਐ ਭਾਗਾ ਰਤੀ ਚਾਰਿ ॥**

**ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ ਤਿਤੁ ਸਚੈ ਦਰਬਾਰਿ ॥੨॥**

Jit mukh sada salahiai bhagan rati chaar  
Nanak tae mukh ujlai tit sachae durbaar

*The mouths that always praise the Lord, are fortunate and beautiful.  
Nanak, those faces shall shine in the True Lord's court.*

## INTRODUCTION

With the celebration of the international Women year considerable interest has been shown in the social, cultural, educational and political development of women over the globe. As a result some remarkable changes have taken place. Whereas merely half a century ago women had to fight for winning the right of the vote in England, they have been granted parity in pay without much struggle.

However the struggle of women for emancipation has been arduous although slow. Even up to recent times women in China had to wear tightening iron shoes incapacitating them from running or walking gracefully. In Japan up to very recent times women were not allowed any schooling. In India, too, the role of women has been secondary and *subordinate* one and has been limited to house-hold chores. The domineering shadow of males has been a sword of Damocles over their heads which has never allowed them to rise to their full stature. Education was denied to them. In the Punjab, now proud of being the most advanced part of India, there was no provision for the Education of women except for rudimentary coaching in Dehras (denominational schools). This was a remnant of the schools started by Guru Amar Das but their limitation was that they taught only language and as soon as the student was able to read scriptures, he/she was struck off the rolls. The first regular school for women was established by Bhai Takhat Singh (1860-1937) at Ferozepore as late as 1892.

Scholars and philosophers throughout the world have been rather unfair towards fair sex and have generally denounced and discredited women establishing male superiority over the female. It has been argued that "Where two ride on a horse, one must needs ride behind". Schopenhauer called women "intellectual myope" and equated them with "growing up children - a kind of middle step between the child and the man, who is the true human being". He has charged women with falseness, disloyalty, infidelity, perjury, treachery and ingratitude and has tried to prove that "Injustice is the fundamental failing of the female character". Medieval Punjabi literature is replete with denunciation of women depicting woman as an ungrateful parasite undermining the manliness of males. Kakai was considered as the ruin of the House Of Dashratha and likewise viles of Sahiban earned her the following imprecation:

"Bhatth rannan di dosti, khuri jinan di mat;

Hass ke laundian yarian, ro ke dindian dass."

(Cursed be the women. They are fickle-minded. They are over-romantic when they fall in love but treacherous when they desert shedding crocodile tears.)

Let no one suppose that these grotesque remarks were passed only by Indians. This is what Tartullian said:

"Do you know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age; the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the Devil's gateway; you are the unsealer of that tree, you are the first deserters of the divine law; you are she who persuades him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert—that is death—even the Son of God had to die."<sup>1</sup>

No one will deny that many a husband today finds it quite impossible to face up to the fact that his wife is abler than he and so he keeps her immersed in dull daily drudgery of day-to-day routine work of the household, to which, finding no escape, she eventually surrenders herself. Realization has been growing among males that this is morally wrong, socially indefensible and economically detrimental and stupid. Everybody loses—the next generation, the husband, the country and the society—from keeping intelligent, energetic, industrious and intellectual women chained to the sink. Unfortunately public opinion has so developed that most work in the home is considered as woman's work. As a result there has been established a curious code of behaviour regarding men's and women's jobs. A man working in a cafe would gladly wash up and clean the floor but he would hesitate doing the same job in his home. This attitude must crumble down and make place for a more rational and egalitarian approach towards work.

For the past two decades McCall's Magazine has carried on a programme of broad objective research on women. Most of their work concerns advertising but Mr. Mills Shepard<sup>1A</sup>, former director of research for McCall's and Mr. Wiseman<sup>2</sup> conclude that over and above apparel, home and children which are key interests of women, they are also interested in machinery, mechanical apparatus, adventure, conflict, competition, history, national and international news, business, economics, sports and animals. Religion is their top interest.

The same conclusions were drawn by Merrille de Voe working independently of others.

There is no denying the fact that women in our modern society enjoy, in theory, the same rights and liberties as men. But the submerged prejudices that remain in the upbringing as well as the conventional behaviour expected of them are painfully evident almost everywhere. My attempt in the next few pages is to endeavour to glance at the roots of such prejudices vis-a-vis Sikh way of life and practice. Let no one go away with the idea that I am trying to establish the superiority of my religion over the others'. I am only stating the Sikh view of life in the hope that the Sikhs would also rethink over the matter and improve their position which is by no means ideal at this time.

<sup>1</sup> David and Vera Mace. "Marriage East and West".

<sup>1A</sup> Mills Shepard. "Advertising and Selling", 1952, page 77.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Wiseman. "Advertising Handbook", 1950, page 144

## THE SIKH WOMAN

Ever since the fall of Adam, woman has been looked down upon as a retarding factor in the spiritual progress of man. She has been degraded, demoralised and discredited as arresting the imagination of man. In the Holy Bible, we find the birth of woman having taken place from one of the ribs of Adam. (Genesis II, 21-25). This made her subservient to man for ever. In Christianity, man is thought to be the image and glory of God, while woman is the glory of man. It is argued that "Man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man". The touch of a woman is supposed to defile and desecrate the otherwise pure soul of man. In his first letter to Corinthians, St. Paul writes:

"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman."

(Corinthians VII, 1)

And again:

"I say therefore, to the unmarried and the widows that it is good for them if they abide as I."

(Corinthians VII, 9)

He is of the opinion that married men and women would not care for God, so they had better not marry at all. He would not even allow the right of preaching to women because that would make a woman an authority over man. He argues that it was not Adam who sinned, but Eve who transgressed and brought about the fall of man. Women are not allowed to become priests or bishops in the Church. Although this problem is engaging the attention of the Christian intelligentsia these days, it still does not seem likely that the Christian woman will be able to overthrow the yolk of female inferiority so strongly foisted on her by religion.

Islam allowed considerable concessions to women. Prophet Muhammad meticulously laid down the rights of women to the property of their parents and husbands. It was he who emphatically declared that acquisition of knowledge is a duty incumbent on every Muslim male and female. It is rather strange that a woman cannot utter the call to prayer (Azan) or become an Imam (priest) in the mosque. She is not allowed to lead the holy congregation in prayer. Muslims were given the proprietary rights over the women captured as a result of war.

"You may marry those women whom you capture in a battle against the Kafirs." (Holy Quran-Ul-Nissa 4-24).

Writing about women Shamas-ul-ulema maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad writes,

"Women are so created that they cannot compete with men in wordly or spiritual pursuits. Lack of physical strength precludes the possibility of their taking part in Jihad. Their duty is to

bear children, suckle them, and to bring them up. At certain times they are disallowed from observing fasts or saying Namaz."

(Al Quran-Ul-Azma page 101 Taj Co. Ltd Karachi)

Muslim women were disallowed to override the views of their husbands and dominate in any way.

"If your wives are over-bearing, advise them against it. If they do not care, refuse them sexual intercourse. If they still persist, then give them a thrashing." (Holy Quran. Ulnissa 4-34).

"The Qur'anic verse regarding the testimony of two women being equal to that of one man is as follows:

وَأَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ  
فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهُدَاءِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ  
إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى

[And get two witnesses out of your own men and, if there are not two men, then a man and two women such as ye choose for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her. (ii. 282)]

On the same subject there is a Tradition by the Holy Prophet which says:

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ: خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي  
أَحَدِي أَوْ فِي نَحْوِهَا إِلَى الْمُصَلَّى فَتَمَرَّ عَلَى الْبَنَاءِ فَقَالَ: يَا مَعْشَرَ النَّسَاءِ أَتَسْتَشِيرُنَّ  
فَأَبِي أَرْثُكُمْ أَلَا تَرَاهُنَّ النَّارَ يَقْلَنُ وَيَعْدُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ تَكْثُرُنَّ النَّارَ  
وَتَقْصُرُنَّ الْعَرْشِينَ، مَا رَأَيْتُ مِنْ نَائِصَاتٍ عَقْلٍ وَدِينٍ إِذْ حَبَّ إِلَيَّ  
الرَّحُلُ الْخَازِمِ مِنْ إِحْدَاكُنَّ، قُلْنَ: مَا لِنَقْصَانٍ دِينِنَا وَعَقْلِنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟  
قَالَ: أَلَيْسَ شَهَادَةُ الْمَرْأَةِ مِثْلُ نَقْصِ شَهَادَةِ الرَّجُلِ؟ قُلْنَ: بَلَى، قَالَ:  
فَذَلِكَ مِنْ نَقْصَانِ عَقْلِيَّهَا. أَلَيْسَ إِذَا حَاضَتْ لَمْ تَصَلِّ وَلَمْ تَعْمَلْ قُلْنَ:  
بَلَى، قَالَ: فَذَلِكَ مِنْ نَقْصَانِ دِينِهَا.

[Abu Sa'id Khudri reported. The Prophet came out either on (the occasion of) 'Id al-Fitr or 'Id al-Adha towards the place where

1 Kausar Niazi. Modern challenges to Muslim families 1976, pages 19-21.

the 'ld congregation was held. He passed by the side of a number of women. Thereupon he said: O group of women, spend your money in charity for I see that the majority of you will taste Hell-fire, They said: Why, O Prophet of God? He said: You utter curses and disobey your husbands. I see you defective in understanding and religion. Even a wise man loses his wisdom on account of you. They said: What is the defect of our understanding and religion? The Prophet said: Is it not a fact that the testimony of a woman is equal to half that of a man? They said: Yes. He said: This is the defect of your understanding. Is it not a fact that when you undergo monthly courses, you miss your prayers and fasts? They said: Yes. He said: This is the defect of your religion.]

The Western philosopher, Aristotle, thought woman to be an "agreeable blunder of God" and "an erroneous development". In Hinduism also, we find references to women in the Vedas where so much is made of celibacy and it is thought that married men cannot aspire to communion with God or lead a saintly and pure life. Women were excluded from religious functions. Manu disallowed women from listening to the Vedas although there is ample evidence that most of the songs in the Vedas were composed by women. A woman was thought to accept man as her "Lord" and to have no personal religion or spiritual responsibility other than that of her husband. A son was welcome as one who would clear the way for his father's salvation, whereas the birth of a girl was an anathema to the parents. She was contemptuously called "a stone". Daughters were often strangled to death. This practice was most common among the Rajputs even up to the 19th Century.<sup>1</sup> In the Punjab, this heinous crime was committed by putting some sugar into the mouth of the innocent daughter and then saying:

*"Gur Khayeen te puni kateen  
Aap na ayeen viran nu ghateen."  
"Eat sugar and spin cotton,  
Come not again, but send brothers."*

Abhorrence of women was very common from the 8th to the 15th Century in India. The yogis, Sidhs and Naths, known as the "respository of learning and religion" were all misogynists. Gorakh, the most popular Nath writes:

*"Baghan jindle, Baghan bindle, Baghan hamari kaya  
In baghan trai loi khai, Badhat Gorakh raya."  
(Gorakh Bani)*

*"Woman defiles the soul, woman destroys vitality,  
Woman eats away your body.  
This she-leopard has eaten the three worlds,  
I, Gorakh, have bound her hand and foot."*

<sup>1</sup> The practice was later declared illegal by Lord William Cavendish Bentinck (1828-1835) and severe punishments were imposed upon the perpetrators of this crime.

A Sidh divine, Charpat, writes in the same strain:

*"Dam kadh baghan le aya, mao kahe mere put wiahia,  
Gili lakari ko ghun, laya, un dal mul chun khaya."*

"Lo, he spent the money and got a cat as a spouse.

The mother is overjoyed that her son is married.

The poor soul does not know that termite has entered the  
green wood

And will eat it away root and branch."

Chaurangee Nath (popularly known as Puran Bhagat) was taught to abhor and detest women, with the result that poor Sundran, who fell in love with him, had to put an end to her life. Tulsi Das, known as the "Moon" of Hindi literature, vehemently wrote against women; he called a woman "*Ameya war gareogari*", "A woman is half nectar, half poison." A very interesting conversation regarding women is supposed to have taken place between Lord Buddha and his most trusted and faithful follower, Ananda, as follows:

Ananda: How should we behave towards women, O Lord?

Buddha: Do not see them.

Ananda: But if we should see them, Lord?

Buddha: No talking.

Ananda: But if they should speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?

Budda: Then keep wide awake, Ananda.

On being hard pressed by Ananda to admit women into the monastic order, Lord Buddha agreed to admit them but said that his religion would not survive as long as it would have done otherwise..

One can well imagine the irreparable harm done to society by this pernicious doctrine of female inferiority. Woman came to be regarded as a child-bearing machine, "The shoe of man", "A whip for man's carnal desire and spiritual degradation", "A paper doll". "An idiot with the brain on the nape of its neck". This attitude still persists in some districts of India. In Ranchi for instance, a woman cannot touch a plough; if it happens, consternation prevails and the whole village has to atone for the woman's remissness. Fowls, pigeons and pigs have to be sacrificed before she can be exonerated. Kharias make the women draw the plough, eat grass and then go round the village begging alms for the tribal feast. Todas do not allow their women to use or even touch milk. Women cannot even pass by a dairy, if they do, the milk is polluted. Medieval Punjabi literature is replete with the condemnation of women. Waras Shah, the veteran Punjabi poet, condemned women as being "undependable". Peeloo calls woman "a quagmire"; Suthra calls them "the well of troubles". A stream of condemnation led women towards feminine servility which in turn proved extremely detrimental to the best interests of the society and the country at the time of the invasions of India from the outside. The rigour with which



restrictions were imposed on women ranged from heavy fines to ostracism, total boycott, excommunication and sometimes extinction. Guru Nanak (1469-1539) pitted himself against this injustice and he challenged the values of society at great peril to himself. It was an uphill task to ameliorate the condition of a society in which the Brahmanical overlordship had woven a rigid but reassuring cocoon of restrictions the observance of which had become a preoccupation with all.

Guru Nanak restored to women the full rights and privileges enjoyed by men. He tried to raise them from the depths of degradation to the heights of glory. He conferred on her the title of the "daughter of God" and he swept away the age old threadbare and derogatory terminology used to malign women.

In *Asa di Var*, he says:

"It is by woman the condemned one, that we are conceived,

And from her that we are born; it is with her that we are betrothed and married,

It is woman we befriend, it is she who keeps the race going;

When one woman dies, we seek another; it is with her we become established in society.

Why should we call her inferior, who gives birth to great men?

A woman is born of a woman, none is born without a woman.

O Nanak, only the one True Lord, is without a woman."

Guru Nanak, and the other Gurus, allowed women an equal share in religious worship. Woman came to be regarded as equal with man, and she was supposed to shoulder the responsibility for her own actions herself.

"All (*women as well as men*) acknowledge the same God as their own;

Show me any one who does not.

Each person is responsible for his (*or her*) own actions

And shall have to settle his (*or her*) own account."

(*Var Asa*).

Women were allowed to lead religious congregations, to take part in the continuous recitation of the holy scriptures, to work as priests or preachers, and to participate freely in all religious, cultural, social, political and secular activities. Ever since the first roar of Sikhism in the Punjab, women have been attending all occasions of public worship, all social functions and political conferences. They even fought in wars by organising themselves into *jathas* (groups). Mai Bhago and Sharan Kaur played unforgettable part in Sikh politics.

**Suttee**, the custom of burning with the dead husband on the funeral pyre, was the cruellest of all customs. Guru Amar Das condemned it very strongly as follows:

“They are not suttees who burn themselves with their dead husbands:

Rather they are suttees, Nanak, who die with the mere shock of separation from their husbands.

And they too, are to be considered suttees, who abide in modesty and contentment,

Who wait upon their Lord and rising in the morning, ever remember Him.”

Again, in *Suhi ki Var*, he says:

“Women burn themselves in fire with their husbands:

If they appreciate their husbands, they undergo sufficient pain by their death.

If they appreciate them not, Nanak, why should they burn at all?”

Guru Amar Das even persuaded King Akbar to stop this revolting practice and succeeded in having a law passed. However *Suttee* still persisted and was in vogue up to the time of Lord Cavendish William Bentinck who finally banned it and dealt with the law breakers very sternly.

Marriage, in Sikhism, is regarded as a sacred bond of mutual help in attaining the heights of wordly and spiritual joy. It is something sacrosanct. Telling about the ideal marriage, the Guru says:

“They are not husband and wife who only have physical contact;

Rather they are wife and husband who have one spirit in two bodies.”

This is an ideal which can be achieved. Sikhism, being a way of life and a code of conduct, such exemplary character is not difficult to find in its history. The devoted and brave daughter of the magistrate of Patti was an ideal Sikh. She was married to a leper but she loved him from the inmost recesses of her heart. She carried him about on her head in a basket for many years till he was cured at the sacred tank of Amritsar, by the grace of God. Bhai Gurdas, the interpreter of the holy scriptures, says:

“*Lok ved gur gian wich Ardh sariri mokh duari*”.

“From the temporal as well as the spiritual point of view, woman is man's other half and she assists him in achieving salvation. She assuredly brings happiness to the virtuous.”

When the ideas and the actual facts are put together, one is wonderstruck to know how Sikh womanhood proved the practicality of the Sikh doctrines.

Purdah or the veil (a tent-like contraption with which women hide themselves from male eyes) was another very bad custom strictly enforced among women. It was thought to be a shield for women, a protection against the lustful eyes of the invaders, but it made women cowards and they came to be known as "*Abala*" (powerless). It had been dinned into their ears from time immemorial that a woman is a nonentity. In troublous times, when the husbands left their wives, mothers and daughters at the mercy of invaders, this shield of the veil never defended them. They were frequently herded away to be sold in the streets of Ghazni (Afghanistan). A very popular extant Punjabi song is still sung by Punjabi women. It depicts a woman being forcibly abducted by the invaders under the very nose of her husband, father and brother. In utter helplessness, she cries for help from an unknown warrior:

"O passing knight, none but you can help me.  
My father has fallen, my brother is in a dream.  
My husband has laughed me away, saying he can re-marry;  
O passing knight, I beseech thee, rescue me from these  
gory clutches!"

The Gurus raised their voices against purdah. Guru Amar Das was the first to condemn it. He did not even allow the Queen of Haripur to come into the *sangat* (religious assembly) wearing a veil. The Guru said:

*"Raho raho re bahuria ghungat jin kadhie  
Ghungat kadh gai tere age.  
Un ki gail tuhi mat lage".*

(Detested are those who come to me in veils. Think how many have degraded themselves like this. Why should you foolishly follow their bad practice?).

The immediate effect of the removal of the purdah was that women gained an equal status with men. Those who lived as grovelling slaves of society came to be fired with a new hope and courage to lift themselves to be equals of the best in humanity. The spirit of woman was raised with a belief that she was not a helpless creature but was a responsible being endowed with a will of her own with which she could do much to mould her own destiny. She acquired a force with which she transcended all her past and acquired a new character. Women came forward as the defenders of their honour and dignity. They came to realise their position in society and they always stood as a rock against the tyrant holding their own in the face of social turmoil and brutal force of the invaders, who used to abduct Indian beauties to sell them in the bazaars of Ghazni.



Relieved from unnecessary and unreasonable customs, the Sikh women became the temporal and spiritual supporters of men. Mai Bhago, the brave woman, helped the Forty Saved Ones to keep on the right path when the latter fell down from their high position as the Guru's faithful Sikhs and signed a disclaimer renouncing their allegiance to him. She admonished them for leaving the Guru at a very crucial time. She, herself, set out with a firm determination to wrench away the sword from the enemy and help the Guru. This pricked the consciences of the deserters who then willingly went back along with Mai Bhago and eventually laid down their lives for the Guru. Another example of this type is found in Sikh history when Guru Teg Bahadur came to Amritsar. The self-centred people of Amritsar closed the doors of the Golden Temple and would not allow him in. The Guru went back to Kotha Sahib about three miles from the city. The city women felt sorry at the treatment meted out to the Guru and they went to him in a body supplicating his forgiveness. The Guru accordingly forgave the people and said, "The women of Amritsar know how to love the will of God." These women thus acted as the "conscience of men" in Sikhism.

This is the ideal by which Sikh women lived and transformed themselves from the bane of society to the boon of humanity.

At Shivratri fair in Batala, Guru Nanak was questioned by the Sidhas as to why he, a religious preacher, "added yeast to milk", by leading a married life. The Guru replied, "Even you have not achieved what you preach, otherwise why would you denounce women and yet go begging to them for food."

The same question was asked by a learned questioner from Guru Hargobind, who not only led a family life but also donned two swords. The Guru's reply was:

*Daulat guzran hai,  
Aurat Iman hai,  
Puttar nishan hai.*

(Money is my servant. Wife is my conscience and children keep the race going.)

Sikh women not only acted as the check and restraint on the weaknesses of their husbands, but they also proved as their equals in service, devotion, sacrifice and bravery. Mata Sahib Devan, the mother of Khalsa, set a record by doing all sorts of selfless service in the *langar* (free kitchen). She was never seen without work. She would forget her meals for days in serving meals to the needy. She did twenty-four hours service on special occasions. Her motto was "Hands at work and mind on the Lord." In devotion, Bibi Amro, the daughter of Guru Angad, reigned supreme. It was she who brought Guru Amar Das to the fold of Sikhism. One is wonder-struck at the sacrifice of hundreds and thousands of Sikh women who received their butchered sons in their laps, who were tortured

to death, starved or flayed alive and cut in twain.\*

In "*Hayat-i-Afghani*", there is a story of a Sikh woman who was attacked by a Pathan. She knocked him down, seized his sword and dismissed him contemptuously. The Pathan felt a great sense of shame at his defeat by a woman and he asked her to kill him. The woman, instead, gave him his sword telling him never to molest a woman in future.

A remarkable incident of valour and statesmanship occurred at Nander Sahib. The Muslims constantly tried to desecrate the holy shrine built at the place where the Tenth Guru expired in 1708. The Sikhs always gave a tough fight, but being very small in numbers, they eventually began to desert the place. The news of this reached the Malwa in the Punjab. About two hundred Sikh women volunteered themselves, dressed in saffron robes, formed themselves into a battalion and rode to Nander on horseback. On reaching Nander, they engaged the enemy in a skirmish and not only defeated the usurpers, but also captured their drum and banner which can still be seen in the Toshakhana of the Sikh Temple at Nander.

The Sikhs are not allowed to exercise proprietary rights over women captured in battle. It is on record that in a battle the Begum of the Governor of Bassi Pathanan fell into the hands of the Sikhs. Ajit Singh, the Guru's son himself escorted her back to the enemies' camp and so long as she stayed with the Sikhs, she was treated as a sister. There are numerous such examples of chivalry in Sikh history and this has earned a reputation for them even from their opponents. Qazi Nur Muhammad, who himself fought against the Sikhs, records such incidents in his Jangnama and concludes, "Really, these dogs have great respect for women."

On Baisakhi day in the year A.D. 1699, Guru Gobind Singh convened a big gathering of his followers. He took his five tried men, dressed them in warrior's uniforms and began to make preparations for initiating them into the Khalsa. The Guru was preparing the *Amrit* (baptismal water) with his sword, when his wife, Sahib Devan, offered some sugar cakes as her contribution. The Guru took the sweets and said:

"Your coming is most opportune; my Sikhs will not only be as tough as the steel of my sword, but also as sweet as your sugar cakes."

This is how a woman actually sweetened the nectar of life for a Sikh. She is still remembered as the mother of the virile Khalsa.

In the Sikh way of life, women have equal rights with men. They have the right to vote to elect representatives to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (the central body for the management of Sikh shrines).

\* This happened in the Punjab under the Governorship of Meer Mannun, (1748-1753).

Only recently when the managing committee of the famous Sikh Temple at Smethwick (England) failed to run the administration efficiently, the ladies took over the management and controlled the Sikh Temple for one complete year.

Sikh women have the right to join the Panch Pyaras (Five Beloved Ones) and they can also become priests. They can perform Kirtan, solemnize marriages and can work as teachers, doctors, lawyers and judges.

Thus, in Sikhism, all the invidious distinctions between man and woman have been totally abolished and Sikh women are in no way considered to be inferior to men. As members of the Khalsa, Sikh women have to defend themselves and strive for personal salvation as well as to fulfil the difficult duty of helping the needy, the weak and the downtrodden. Women are considered to be acceptable and worthy members of the Khalsa fraternity, which is a mighty union of service and sacrifice and a living witness to God. Thus, Sikhism engrafted the courage of true soldiers to the enthusiasm of the devoted Sikh women, and turned the very dregs of society into the most dauntless and sturdy soldier-saints.

Sikh women have played a glorious part in the history and examples of their moral dignity, service and self-sacrifice will remain a source of inspiration to posterity. Their endurance, greatness, administrative ability and heroic deeds are par excellence. The eye is dazzled and the mind is dazed at the brilliance which encompasses Sikh women who never flinched from their duty, never allowed their faith and ardour to be dampened, and always upheld the honour and glory of the Khalsa.

## **Lives of some prominent Sikh Women**

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## **LIVES OF SOME PROMINENT SIKH WOMEN**

### **BEBE NANAKI—THE FIRST DISCIPLE**

Bebe Nanaki (1464-1518) was the elder and the only sister of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. She was highly intelligent, spiritually awake and pious. It was she who recognised divine light in Guru Nanak before anyone else could perceive it. Her affection for her brother has become a byword in the Punjab and is a perennial theme of Punjabi folklore. Whenever her father criticised Nanak for his so called aversion to domestic affairs, she always shielded him proclaiming his spiritual enlightenment and his lofty aims.

She was married to Jai Ram, a petty officer in the service of the Nawab of Sultanpore. She prevailed upon her husband to secure employment for Nanak in the Nawab's grannary. When it was rumoured that Nanak drowned in the river, she did not believe it and only said, "The sun will set only after flooding the others with light."



**Bebe Nanaki offering a *rabab* (a musical instrument) to Bhai Mardana, a life-long companion of Guru Nanak.**

## **MATA KHIWI—THE EMBODIMENT OF HUMILITY**

Mata Khivi was the wife of Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552), the second Guru of the Sikhs. She toiled lovingly in the Guru's kitchen every day and was very fond of serving food with her own hands. Her courtesy, humility and selfless service inspired many to accept the Guru's Way. She is mentioned in the Holy Granth as follows:

“Khivi was noble-minded. Deep was her shadow—like that of a mighty tree. Regularly and bountifully she doled out ambrosial rice pudding enriched with clarified butter to the people who visited the Guru”.

Satta Balwand-Ram Kali Ki Var



Mata Khivi distributing *kheer* (rice pudding).

Satnam Singh 04

## **MATA SAHIB KAUR—THE MOTHER OF THE KHALSA**

Mata Sahib Kaur, wife of Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), was a very pious and spiritually enlightened lady. When on 30 March 1699, the Guru prepared Amrit, she represented women on the occasion and added sugar-puffs to the Holy Water. Khalsa was a martial order but by her gesture she symbolically added modesty and sweetness to its traits. She is therefore known as 'The Mother Of The Khalsa'.

Guru Gobind Singh passed away in 1708 and Mata Sahib Kaur settled at Delhi and guided the affairs of the indomitable Khalsa. It was she who directed Bhai Mani Singh to collect Guru Gobind Singh's writings and edit them into what is now known as 'The Dasam Granth'.



Mata Sahib Kaur contributing sweetness to *Amrit* (Sikh baptismal water).

## **MAI BHAGO—THE BRAVE**

Guru Gobind Singh was besieged by the combined forces of the hill chiefs and Aurangzeb in the fort of Anand Pur. As the siege prolonged, the number of Guru's supporters dwindled down to a hundred odd people and the resistance seemed disastrous. Prompted by the promises of free passage declared by the invaders, forty Sikhs tried to compell the Guru to abandon the fort and lay down arms. The Guru declined and instead advised them to hold on. In utter frustration the forty Sikhs resigned from the Khalsa and signed a disclaimer saying "We reject you as our Guru and we renounce our allegiance to The Khalsa."

When the forty deserters reached their villages, their wives, organised under Mai Bhago (later known as Bhag Kaur) severely criticised the pusillanimity and cowardice of their disheartened husbands. She led them back into a bloody skirmish with the armies of Wazir Khan of Sirhind at Khidrana (now known as Muktsar). Out of the forty deserters only one Mahan Singh was alive when the Guru reached the battlefield. Mahan Singh died in the Guru's arms with the satisfaction of having been pardoned for his transgression. The Guru blessed the forty brave fighters as Muktsas (immortals) and the place came to be known as Muktsar (The Sacred Place Of The Immortals).

Mai Bhago lived long after this battle and the spear used by her in this battle is still preserved at Hazur Sahib (Nander-Deccan).



Mai Bhago leading devotees into war.

## **WOMEN BRAVING PERSECUTION**

Mir Mannun, the Muslim Governor of the Punjab (1748-1753) was an irreconcilable foe of the Sikhs and was determined to extirpate the Sikhs. Fierce persecution and terror gripped the Punjab in his reign. The Sikhs' heads were sold for money and thousands of their women and children were captured and imprisoned every day in Lahore at a place called Nakhas (now known as Shahid Ganj—The place of martyrs). The women were compelled to grind corn. They were forced to accept Islam or wear the wreaths made from the flesh of their slain children round their necks. Thousands were suffocated to death and thousands were starved or speared. According to contemporary records few renounced their steadfast faith in Sikhism despite the bitterest ordeal.



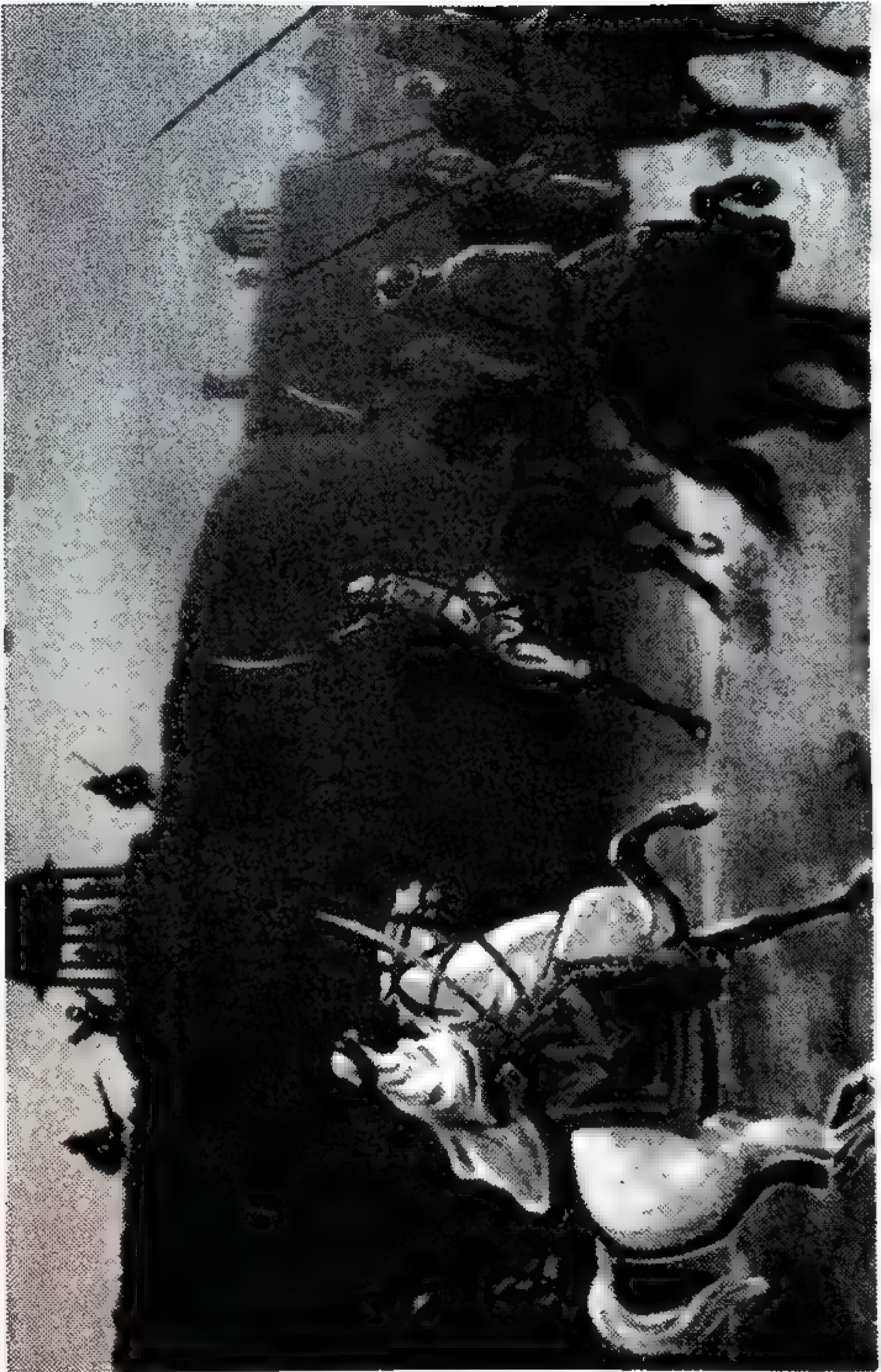
Women plying heavy grinding stones as punishment for not accepting Islam

## **SARDARNI SADA KAUR—THE VALIANT**

Sardarni Sada Kaur (1762-1832, wife of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh Kanhaiya, was the ruler of Amritsar and Gurdaspur with her capital at Batala. In a battle with Mahan Singh Sukarchakia (father of Maharaja Ranjit Singh) her husband was killed and on receiving this news she took the messenger's horse, galloped to the battle scene, removed her husband's weapons and fought bravely. Having lost in battle, the shrewd and enterprising Sada Kaur proposed the engagement of her daughter Mehtab Kaur to Ranjit Singh, the son of Mahan Singh and thus to create a bond of friendship between the two most powerful confederacies of the Sikhs. This not only brought peace and prosperity but also laid the foundation of the Sikh Raj in the Punjab. It is rightly said that "she was the ladder by which Ranjit Singh reached the summit of power".

When Shah Zaman of Kabul invaded the Punjab in 1796 the Sikhs met at Amritsar and planned a retreat into jungles, but Sada Kaur made a spirited speech and declared that even if everyone else ran away she and her armies would fight the invader. Impressed by the unity of the Sikhs, Shah Zaman did not advance and returned to Kabul.

She planned a surprise attack on Lahore and conquered it for Ranjit Singh in 1799. She figured prominently in the Punjab politics for 30 years and died in December 1832.



Sada Kaur challenging before the Shahi fort Lahore (1799).

## **BIBI BALBIR KAUR--THE STEADFAST PROTESTER**

On September 14, 1923, Mr. Johnstone Wilson, on behalf of the British Government, interfered with the Akhand Paath (continuous recitation of the Holy Granth) at Jaito. The Sikhs did not tolerate this insult and marched to Jaito in batches of 500. Some batches were arrested and beaten up but this did not dampen the spirit of the protesters. On February 21, 1924 the Government resorted to firing. In one of the batches protesting on 21 February was Bibi Balbir Kaur with her infant child in her arms. The child was hit by a bullet. Balbir Kaur resignedly laid the child on the road and kept marching with the column singing the Guru's hymns. Soon however she fell to a shot from the machine gun. On that fateful day 100 Sikhs were killed and nearly 300 were wounded. Pandit Nehru came to watch the atrocities. He was immediately arrested and imprisoned.

The struggle ended a year later on July 21, 1925 when the Government at last agreed to allow the Sikhs to hold their Akhand Paath at Jaito.



Bibi Balbir Kaur sacrificing her child at the altar of faith

## **Maharani Jindan Kaur** (1817-1 August 1863)

Maharani Jindan Kaur was the daughter of Sardar Manna Singh Aulakh, a Sikh of a village, Chachar in the district of Sialkot, now in Pakistan. She was the queen of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who ruled over a vast kingdom, stretching from the Khyber Pass to Kashmir and the territory between the Indus and Sutlej rivers. Maharani Jindan Kaur gave birth to her only son Duleep Singh on September 4, 1837. Duleep Singh became Maharaja on September 18, 1843. Jindan Kaur became the regent of the country for Duleep Singh who was only about six years old at that time. Maharani Jindan was known for her beauty, intelligence and courage. During her rule as the regent there were two devastating Anglo-Sikh wars provoked by the British. Two of her commander-in chiefs turned out to be traitors. There was a treaty between the Durbar and the British Government. They later undertook the maintenance of the administration and the protection of Duleep Singh until his coming of age. Maharani Jindan Kaur was deprived of all powers and was given a pension of one and half Lakh Rupees.

She was very unhappy with the arrangements and protested against the Treaty. The British Resident suspected the Maharani's intentions. He banned the prominent political advisers visits to her apartments. Then against her wishes she was removed to Sheikhpura where she was under house arrest. In her letter to John Lawrence, she complained about the way she was treated. According to her own account she was dragged out by her hair. The forced separation from her minor son was immoral and unjust. After the annexation of the Sikh Raj into the British Empire, Jindan Kaur was taken to Chunar fort situated on the banks of river Ganges. At midnight on April 19, 1849 she escaped from there disguised as a monk. The British confiscated her jewelery and stopped her pension.

Maharani Jindan covered a very long, dangerous and arduous journey to reach Kathmandu, Nepal in ten days. Jung Bahadur, the Prime Minister of Nepal, out of his regard for the late Maharaja Ranjit Singh, gave Jindan Kaur asylum and a pension. She did not know that Duleep Singh was being fostered by Lord John Login and Lady Login. They created such an environment for the nine year old Duleep that he converted to Christianity. He came to England in 1854 where he lived like an English Lord and he was well liked by Queen Victoria. Mahanrani Jindan was allowed to meet her son at Spencer's Hotel, Calcutta on the 16th January, 1861 after thirteen years of separation. The meeting was joyful as well as sorrowful. The mother was shocked to learn that Duleep had his long beautiful hair cut short and as a consequence his Sikh faith lost. Duleep apologized to her and promised her that he would come back to Sikhi. He fulfilled his promise on 25 May 1886, when he initiated into Sikhi by the five Pyaras Bhai Roor Singh, Bhai Jawand Singh, Sardar Bhai Thakar Singh and two other Sikhs from a ship at Eden.

Maharani Jindan was permitted to travel with her son to England, a residence was found for her at 1 Lancaster Gate, London. By now her famed charm had gone and she had become almost blind. She passed away peacefully on the morning of the August 1, 1863 at Abingdon House, Kensington. Her last wish was that her body be cremated in Lahore next to the late Maharaja Ranjit Singh's grave. Her casket was kept at Kensal Green Cemetery, London W10 4RA, a memorial plaque has been put up there in the Dissenters Chapel. Duleep took her body to India for cremation in the spring of 1864, where she had to be cremated at Nasik near Bombay, because Duleep Singh was not allowed to travel to Lahore, Punjab. Sixty years after this, in 1924 her ashes were dug out and taken to Lahore by Duleep Singh's eldest daughter, princess Bamba Sutherland and buried these at the Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Samadh.

Christy Campbell, author of *The Maharaja Box*, a book about the Maharani Jindan's son, Duleep, says she was "one of the most remarkable characters of the 19th century history let alone Indian or Sikh history". This is despite the fact that much of what is known about her is "through the words of the British, who regarded her as a threat to their power in India and therefore did their best to make her reputation as bad as possible."

### **Mata Gujri (1624-1705)**

She was the daughter of Bhai Lal Chand and Bishen Kaur, a pious couple of Kartarpur, in Jalandhar district of Punjab. Lal Chand had migrated from his ancestral village, Lakhanpur, in Ambala District, at Kartarpur where his daughter was married to (Guru) Teg Bahadur on 4 February 1633. The betrothal had taken place four years earlier when Teg Bahadur had come to Kartarpur in the marriage party of his elder brother, Suraj Mall. Bishen Kaur, the mother, was charmed by the handsome face of Teg Bahadur and she and her husband pledged the hand of their daughter to him. After the marriage ceremony, the couple came to reside in Amritsar. Bride Gujri won the appreciation of everyone.

In 1635 Mata Gujri left Amritsar with the family to reside in Kiratpur in Sivalik foothills. After the death of Guru Hargobind Sahib in 1644, she came with her husband and mother-in-law Mata Nanki, to Bakala (Amritsar). There they lived in peaceful seclusion, Teg Bahadur spending his time in meditation and Gujri performing the humble duties of a pious and devoted housewife. After he was installed Guru in 1664 Guru Teg Bahadur accompanied by Mata Gujri, went on a visit to Amritsar, travelling on to Makhoval, near Kartarpur, where a new habitation, named Chakk Nanaki (later Anandpur) was founded in the middle of 1665.

Soon after this Guru Teg Bahadur along with his mother and wife set out on a long journey to the east. Leaving his family at Patna, he travelled to Bengal and Assam. At Patna Mata Gujri gave birth to her illustrious son Guru Gobind Singh on 22 December 1666. Guru Teg Bahadur returned to Patna in 1670 for a brief stay to see his son. On the instructions of Guru Ji the family moved back to her parental home at Lakhanpur village on 13 September 1670 so that Guru Teg Bahadur can join them here later. An old well is called 'Mata ka Khoo' just outside the village to commemorate the visit. From Lakhanpur the family proceeded to Chakk Nanaki where Guru Ji joined them in March 1671 travelling through Malwa region seeing Sangat (people) on the way.

At Chakk Nanaki on 11 July 1675 was a momentous day when Guru Teg Bahadur left for Delhi prepared to make the supreme sacrifice. She showed courage at the time of parting and bore the ultimate trial with fortitude. Her husband was executed in Delhi on 11 November 1675, and Guru Gobind Singh then being very young, the responsibility of managing the affairs, initially fell on her. She was assisted by her younger brother Kirpal Chand.

When in face of prolonged siege by hostile hill Rajas and Mughal troops Anandpur had to be evacuated by Guru Gobind Singh on the night of 5-6 December 1705. Mata Gujri with her younger grandsons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh aged nine and seven respectively, was separated from the main body while crossing the river Sirsa. The three of them were led by their servant, Gangu to the latter's village, Seheri near Morinda, where he treacherously betrayed them to the local Muslim officer. Mata Gujri and her grandsons were arrested on 8 December and confined

to Sirhind Fort in what is referred to in Sikh Chronicles as Thanda Burj, the cold tower. As the children were summoned to appear in court from day to day, the grandmother kept urging them to remain steadfast in their faith.

On 11 December they were ordered to be bricked up alive in a wall, but since the masonry crumbled before it covered their heads, they were executed the following day. Mata Ji died the same day in the tower. Seth Todar Mall, a kind hearted wealthy man of Sirhind cremated the three dead bodies the next day, on the land he bought with gold coins placing on the surface. In Fatehgarh Sahib near Sirhind, there is a shrine called Gurudwara Mata Gujri (Thanda Burj). There Sikhs come from far and wide to pay homage to these martyrs.

Mata Gujri was the first Sikh female martyr in Sikh History. She is also distinguished by being the wife of the martyr (Guru Teg Bahadur), mother of a martyr (Guru Gobind Singh Ji) grandmother of four martyr Sahibzadas (Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh), sister of martyr (Kirpal Chand) and aunt of five martyr sons of Bibi Vero, sister of Guru Teg Bahadur.

### **Bibi Sharan Kaur, Martyr of Chamkaur Sahib**

Bibi Sharan Kaur was killed by Mughal soldiers in 1705, while cremating the bodies of thirty-two Sikh warriors, who died in the epic battle of Chamkaur Sahib in Punjab. These great shaheeds (martyrs) included the older sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh.

Bibi Sharan Kaur was from the village Raipur Rani near Chamkaur Sahib. Her husband Pritam Singh was a Sikh warrior in the service of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Many years before the battle of Chamkaur, she was at Anandpur Sahib with her husband and used to look after Guru Ji's, sons, the four Sahibzadas. She was very much attached to them.

When directed by the Khalsa, Sikhs in the fort (collectively as Guru Roop Khalsa), Guru Gobind Singh Ji left the fort of Chamkaur on the night of December 22, 1705. He stopped at Raipur on his way to Macchiwara and asked Bibi Sharan Kaur to perform the last rites of the martyred Sikhs including his two sons. Bibi Ji was grateful for this seva (sacred service) given to her by Guru Ji. She went to the battlefield and in semi darkness, identified and brought to one place the bodies of 32 Sikh Shaheeds, including those of the two Sahibzadas and her own husband, Pritam Singh.

She collected a lot of dry wood for the funeral pyre, and as the flames leapt towards the sky, the Mughal soldiers came running and discovered her. They were very upset as they wanted the bodies of Khalsa warriors to rot in the open battlefield as a lesson to the people who refused to tell the whereabouts of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Sharan Kaur bravely resisted arrest and was mortally wounded. She was then thrown into the cremation fire by the Mughal soldiers.

That is the story of one of the great Sikh women martyrs, Bibi Sharan Kaur of Raipur Rani near Chamkaur Sahib. Some historians believe that she was probably ancestor of Sikh chiefs, who, by Guru Ji's blessing, later became rulers in Punjab.

## **A List of Sikh Missionary Society's Publications**

All these books except those marked\* are for free distributions to individuals.

1. Introduction to Sikhism
2. Guru Nanak (for children).
3. The Guru's Way (for children).
4. In the Guru's Footsteps (for children).
5. Guru Arjan, the Apostle of Peace.
6. The Sikh Symbols.
7. The Sikh Bangle.
8. A Spur to the Sikh Youth.
9. Main Sikh Kion Han (Punjabi).
10. Rehni Rahe Sol Sikh Mera (Punjabi)
11. The Gurudwara (The Sikh Temple).
12. The Saint-Soldier.
13. Punjabi Teacher through English Medium.
14. Glimpses of Sikhism.
15. The Sikh Marriage Ceremony.
16. The Supreme Sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadar.
17. The Sikh Woman.
18. The Turban and the Sword of the Sikhs.
19. The Teachings of Guru Amardas.
- \*20. The Sikhs and their Way of Life.
- \*21. Sacha Guru (Panjabi).
- \*22. 'A' Level Panjabi.
23. The Turban Victory.
- \*24. Varan Bhai Gurdas.
- \*25. The Sikh Ideology.
- \*26. Sada Gurbani Kirtan .
27. Vaisakhi.
28. Introduction to Guru Granth Sahib.
29. Sikh Religion and Hair.
30. Sikh Religion and Hinduism.



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